Women’s Air Raid Defense (WARD)

Just prior to Pearl Harbor the Army had set up “Little Robert,” an Air Defense Command's information and control center (ICC) at Fort Shafter. Radar contacts, ground observers’ sightings and Wheeler Field’s interceptor status came into the ICC via telephone. The radars had detected and tracked both Japanese attack waves on December 7, and even two scout planes just before the raid, but an effective air defense operations system was lacking. After the attack, the Army created the Air Defense Command to control the 14th Pursuit Wing and the Anti-Aircraft Artillery Brigade. Brigadier General Howard C. Davidson, the commander of the 14th Pursuit Wing, was appointed commander.

The ICC room had a huge plotting board with the outline of the Hawaiian Islands on a grid pattern. Around it, Signal Corps plotters sat or stood, communicating with radar operators, code-named “Oscars,” over telephone headsets. Using implements like shuffleboard sticks, the plotters-known as “Rascals” placed and moved small plastic markers on the board to indicate the locations and status of their Oscars’ radar contacts. If a given track could not be identified, the senior controller would have the pursuit officer, a fighter pilot, scramble interceptors to visually identify the “bogy,” and, if it was an enemy plane, shoot it down.

Davidson had to give up ICC staff from Oahu to create aircraft warning units for Samoa, Fiji and New Caledonia. He appealed to the War Department for an emergency executive order creating a WAAF-like organization for Hawaii. Executive Order 9063 was approved on Christmas Day 1941.

General Davidson asked a Honolulu couple he knew for their help in finding some bright, trustworthy and reliable young women. Alexander and Una Walker were kamaainas (lifetime Hawaii residents), and Una knew many local women through her Red Cross work. They quickly compiled a list of 20 names for him.

For a name, Davidson suggested Women’s Air Defense. The women inserted the word Raid, and thus the WARD was born. Administratively, it was known as the WARD Detachment, Company A, 515th Signal Aircraft Warning Regiment (Special), reporting to the commanding general, 7th Fighter Command.

Davidson soon realized that the population of eligible kamaainas was too small. He also learned, however, that some military wives wanted to stay in Hawaii, in spite of air raid alarms and invasion rumors, and he obtained authority to take anyone going into the WARD off the evacuation lists. About half of those who gathered on New Year’s Day for initial induction were military wives.

Training began immediately. The new WARDs were fitted for pale-blue, Red Cross-style dress and fatigue uniforms. They were also issued helmets and gas masks, as well as armbands signifying they were noncombatants. On the evening of January 12, 1942, young women stepped up to the plotters, adjusted their headsets and waited until they heard, “Rascal, this is Oscar, can you read me?” All around Oahu that night, radar operators were astonished when a self-assured female voice replied, “Oscar, this is Rascal. I read you loud and clear.” Women’s Air Raid Defense plotters had just taken over the night shift. For the first time, American women had officially replaced male soldiers in a war zone and were directly participating in the defense of American territory.

On the first day of February, 104 WARDs moved into quarters at Fort Shafter and took over plotting duties on all four 6 hour shifts. The WARDs quickly became familiar with the characteristics of each radar and its environment. They learned to substitute the intersection of range arcs from multiple radars for the inaccurate azimuth readings. They took over filtering, “cleaning up” the plot by
consolidating apparently separate tracks. As they became familiar with aircraft speeds and turn rates, they took on interceptor vectoring.

In the early morning of March 5, 1942 the Kokee radar site called on VHF radio. Two aircraft were approaching from the southwest, headed for Oahu. The ICC handed over the track to the Opana site, which picked up the aircraft 20 miles east of Kauai. More WARDs soon joined the action as their Oscars picked up the bogies. Colonels and generals suddenly appeared en masse.

The aircraft could not be identified as friendly, and interceptors were scrambled from Wheeler. On a rainy night they had little chance of visual contact, but the ICC managed to cue searchlights. “When the searchlights cut on,” Captain Sam Shaw wrote, “they had in their beams a large flying boat. No anti-aircraft guns opened fire. All hands were determined to have no more trigger-happy misfortunes such as there had been immediately after the December 7th attack.”

The flying boats were Japanese Kawanishi H8K “Emils.” With a range of 4,460 miles, they had flown from the Marshall Islands. Their crews had no more success locating blacked-out Pearl Harbor that rainy night than the interceptors had finding them. Each plane apparently carried two 550 pound bombs, which the Japanese airmen dropped blindly. One pair exploded off the entrance to Pearl Harbor, the other on the outskirts of Honolulu.

The WARDs felt they had vectored in the fighters as close as the technology permitted, and they could have intercepted the intruders with better illumination or a clearer night.

There are currently 125 WARD’s listed on the 7th Fighter Command Roster

In the next issue of the Gazette - Midway to the End of the War.....

Parts of this article were written by Ronald R. Gilliam and originally published in Aviation History Magazine. To read Ronald’s entire article please pick up a copy of the May 2002 issue.

For further reading, a good book is Shuffleboard Pilots: The History of the Women’s Air Raid Defense in Hawaii 1941-1945 by Candace A. Chenoweth, A. Kam Napier

Al Moutran was a member of the 15th Pursuit Group on Dec 7, 1941 and went on to become the T/Sgt Chief Clerk for Fighter Group Operations for the 318th Fighter Group. Al graciously sent me the following letter written to him by Lew Sanders and I thought it might be of interest to the readers of this Gazette. The letter has been shortened for the Gazette but the letter in its entirety can be found on the 7th FC Web Page listed on the back of this Newsletter.

Sept 30, 1980 – Dear Al:

You just can not imagine how surprised I was to hear from you after 36 years. You’ve made my summer! Sure I remember you, Kushner, Marole, Tatiaferro, Stackpole, Treece and a lot of others. I remember how we lived on the hill at Bellows in those pre-fabs with cracks in the floor that let in mosquitoes as big as horseflies. It was a good operation there and because of it we were chosen as the priority Group for the move to Siapan. This made no end of work for everyone but in spite of it the move was made and we ended up as you said, “in the blockhouse”. We did have problems, didn’t we? Dirt, dust, shelling from Tinian, now and then a strafing runs down the runway, flies, Japs, hunger, our pilots getting killed in accidents and not in air combat as you might expect. A period to remember.

I arrived in Hawaii late Feb. ’41 and assigned as C.O. of the 46th Sqdn, 15th Group. I must have gone to the 318th about the same time as you but I can’t seem to remember if it was late ’42 or early ’43. I replaced Col. Charles Stewart.

You will remember that shortly after Siapan was supposedly secured the Sea-Bees moved in on Aslito and started grading 10,000 ft. runways for the B-29’s. A couple of 47s hit road graders so it was decided to move the 318th to Kagman Point.

The Engineers built us a runway and control tower so we moved and started flying missions off that strip. I suspect you has been re-assigned by then and you were fortunate if you were. (No, Al was still there) We just about starved for months. It got so bad that we used sticks of dynamite and hand grenades to fish with in the Bay. The explosions would blow up a bushel at a time. We never did get enough to eat. The 19th Sqdn shot a couple of Jap cows and Dr. McKinley butchered them but some snitch reported it to Island Command and we were ordered to deliver them to the hospital. I borrowed a B-24 and flew back to Hawaii to beg for food and got enough powdered milk, 2 eggs and

A Letter from Lew Sanders

Col. Sanders in the “greenhouse” of a P-38L
Photo courtesy of Hal Dunning via Jack Lambert
one orange for every man in the Group and the Service Group with us. We hadn’t anymore unloaded the than again Island Comm ordered us to deliver the entire load to Headqtrs. We did but everyone was mad enough to drop a few bombs up there.

After Siapan the Group went to Okinawa or rather to a little island Ie Shima which was a little North West of Oki. We ran missions over Japan about every day and on one single day the group pilots shot down 28 planes. It was somewhat different than Siapan where we shot down only a few but we did tear them up on the ground......

Al, in closing I want you to know that I sincerely appreciate the letter that you wrote me. It was magnificent of you and I shall never forget it. Thanks for remembering.

Sincerely Lew

(Lew Sanders passed away December 22, 1985)

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The First Land Based Fighter Over Japan

D.B. Moore of the 78th Fighter Squadron wrote the following: After a month on Iwo and one Very Long Range (VLR) practice mission to Saipan the day finally arrived for our first Very Long Range Fighter mission to Japan. This first mission on April 7, 1945 was to escort 100 plus B-29's of the 73rd Bomb Wing on a mission to Tokyo. Their target was the Nakajima aircraft plant. Our most experienced pilots were chosen for the mission and I was pleased to be assigned to fly the wing of our Squadron Commander, Major Jim Vande Hey. We were up before dawn for our mission briefing and started our takeoffs at 0645. We followed three B-29 navigator aircraft to Japan where we rendezvoused with the strike force over Kozu Shima which was less than a 100 miles from Tokyo. This was a real spectacle as the B-29's completed their join up in a bomber stream and we started our scissor in order to maintain our position over them. I remember the first thing I saw as we approached Japan was Mount Fujiyama, a beautiful snow covered mountain peak. The strike force crossed over the Japanese coast at about 1045 and we dropped our wing tanks over Yokohama as we were intercepted. A later news release from Japan headlined “P-51 bomb Yokohama” which must have been the mostly empty fuel tanks exploding as they hit the ground.

The B-29 strike force of 103 aircraft were stacked up from 12,000 feet and we were 18 to 20,000 feet. The 15th Fighter Group was protecting the front of the bomber stream. None of us who were there will ever forget the sight and radio chatter involved as we were intercepted by a large Japanese force that some estimated to be over 200 aircraft. The first enemy aircraft I saw was a twin engine Nick not more than 500 feet directly above us. I called it out to Major Vande Hey and then tried to climb up behind him but he started a left descending turn toward the bomber stream and the best I could do was fire a burst at him which was then about out of range. I learned later that the B-29 gunners also fired at him and reported that he never pulled out of the dive. Major Vande Hey and I then made a pass at a twin-engine aircraft and I could see my tracers hitting the left engine as I fired from above and the left of Major Vande Hey. We could see the smoke from the tail gunner as he fired back at us.

The bomber stream resembled a black highway in the sky from above due to heavy flak during the bomb run. As we made the big turn around Tokyo and headed towards the sea over the plains of Honshu our squadron turned back to cover a crippled B-29 with the number two engine and wing burning. Another B-29 was attempting to escort him out to sea. Major Tapp who was leading the second element of our squadron shot down four Japanese fighters that were trying to finish the B-29 off. We could only watch as the B-29's wing burned and broke off. It started to spin and then exploded. We didn't see anyone bail out but we heard later that two of the crew in the rear did get out. All in all we thought it was a good mission. The B-29’s lost three, two to flak and one to fighters. The Mustangs lost one over target and another pilot bailed out on the way back to Iwo due to low fuel and the pilot was picked up by an Air Sea Rescue destroyer. The P-51’s claimed 22 destroyed, 6 probable and 6 damaged. My logbook shows that I flew 7 hours fifteen minutes during that first mission.

The Seventh Fighter Command Fighters on Iwo conducted a total of 51 Very Long Range missions before the war ended in August, 1945. The missions changed from escort to fighter strikes as the Japanese intercepts of the bombers dwindled and the B-29’s conducted more of the night fire bombing missions.

In the next issue of the Gazette - The last mission of the war by Jack Rasmussen 333rd FS
The Enlisted Man’s Tale

John DeNure M/Sgt 318th FG writes: “I served on Midway & Siapan as a Master Sergeant. I served under Col. Sanders and then Capt. Dick Berry. The enlisted men had a different life and story to tell from the officers, whom I’ve noticed through the years the Gazette was mostly about. (Not complaining) But I would like to tell about it sometime. I was proud of my time in the service and proud of every officer I served under, even the one who invited me out into the cane field one day to settle a problem we had. But the story that was never told is prefaced in the following clipping:

"Heroes Don’t Win Wars" written by Cpl Earl Nelson and published in Brief Magazine “Why don’t they talk about the guy who is just a soldier? Why doesn’t anybody ever mention the poor bastard who got dragged into the Army, got stuck here on one of these God-forsaken holes, and is doing nothing but his job?” “Ninety or maybe ninety-nine percent of the guys in the Army never had anything happen to them. Take for example, a guy I know named Chuck who was on KP today. Nothing ever happened to him, He doesn’t even get into trouble. What does he do all day? He drives a truck. He goes back and forth over the island on hundred miles a day. He goes to a movie at night; probably a very bad and very old movie which he has already seen four or five times. He goes back to his tent and writes a gushy letter to some babe who has probably thrown him over a year ago. He lies in his slit trench at night during air raids. He goes on KP duty about every fifth day. He sure as hell isn’t going to get any medals or citations. He won’t kill any Japs or knock down any Zeros. He won’t do a damned thing to get his name in the papers. He won’t even get a promotion.

There are lots of guys like Chuck. Most of the guys out here on the islands are like Chuck. Don’t you think that those guys would like to see their names in print, saying that they are fighting the war too? Heroes don’t win wars; they just get their names in the paper. The guys who win wars are the guys who lug reams of paper around, or open thousands of cans of C rations, or clean hundreds of pots and pans, or grease jeeps, or dig latrines, or do any of a thousand jobs that nobody ever heard of, except that poor bastard who has to do them. The guys who are just serial numbers. The guys who say ‘Yes Sir’ like automatons. The guys whose jobs have become so regulated and monotonous that they can do them while their minds are

10,000 miles away. They are the real heroes of this war. They are the guys who are winning this war – if it is really being won.”

In the Preface of the book “One Damned Island After Another” the authors state “The pilots, the gunners, the navigators, the bombardiers, and combat air crewman who fought the enemy in the air from Pearl Harbor to Tokyo have had the Pacific Victory dedicated to them in the headlines, in military decorations, in public demonstrations which have taken many forms in many places. But to the end of the war, and to this very day, nobody has found a way to tell the story of the men – ninety or ninety-nine percent of men to whom nothing ever happened. The men who sat, day after endless day, on the scorched griddles of Pacific sand, where a soldier could, in ten minutes walk to the end of his world. On the atolls where the only release from a monotony deadlier than enemy bombs was a mans diminishing ability to imagine himself somewhere else.”

My father was a M/Sgt who served in the occupation of Japan and you know to this day I really don’t know exactly what he did. He passed away several years ago, so I’ll never know. Don’t let that happen with your story. You may not find it exciting, but as stated above, it was your contribution that won the war and your story deserves to be told.

My request to you John and all of the enlisted men and women who read this, is to send me your stories. There is a ready and waiting audience and I would be extremely pleased to be able to present your stories here in the Gazette and also on the Internet for future generations to read.
REUNIONS

Seventh Fighter Command National Reunion

Is there any interest out there to hold a 7th FC reunion late this year or early next year. I would be willing to set one up here in Seattle at the Museum of Flight. Ken Sweet (78th) has also graciously volunteered to hold it in Milwaukee during the EAA Oshkosh Fly-In. Please let me know if you would be interested and I will start making the arrangements.

506th FG Reunion 2002 at Pigeon Forge, TN

Although the numbers were down a little, the quality was as high as ever at the 506th Fighter Group’s 2002 Reunion in Pigeon Forge, Tennessee. Eighteen Iwo Jima veterans, along with another thirty or so family members and friends, gathered in the Smoky Mountains in late April to renew friendships, swap memories, and compare various physical ailments. The consensus at the end of three days was that the 506th is a remarkably resilient bunch, the P-47 can’t hold a candle to the Mustang, and Louise Mandrell is a fine looking woman!

After arrival on Monday the group gathered for a cookout on the patio of the hotel and then retired to the Hospitality Suite to talk, look at old photos, and drink in moderation. Tuesday morning’s program included a display of model airplanes and a talk by BGEn Frederick Forster, Chief of Staff of the Tennessee Air National Guard. Afternoons were free for shopping, talking, enjoying the mountains, or napping. After a Hawaiian luau at the hotel, featuring Ray Miller’s great shirt, buses took the group to the Louise Mandrell Theater for an evening show. The highlight was Louise coming into the audience to recognize various groups. It is her tradition to hug the leader of each group, so there was some minor scuffling among the 506th as to who was really the leader. Jack Westbrook won, so he got the first hug, but Grady Poole (who actually flew with the 21st Fighter Group, but he thinks our reunions are better) convinced her that he needed a hug, too. When the group sat back down, Ray Miller remained standing, then threaded his way along half a row of seats to get to the aisle, where Louise patiently waited to give him his hug. She just couldn’t resist those steely-eyed fighter pilots!

Retired USAF Chaplain LTC Paul McNeil conducted Wednesday’s Memorial Service, recalling those 506th members whose passing in the last year had been made known to us: Frank Buzze, Henry Manna, Myndret Starin, Arthur Tribley, Charles Veitenheimer, and Delbert Zeller. This was followed by a business meeting, then another free afternoon. The final evening program featured a catered banquet at the Tennessee Aviation Museum. Tables were set in the hanger of this beautiful new facility at the Sevierville Airport, and as an added treat, the management arranged a flight demonstration by their immaculately restored P-47 Thunderbolt.

The Group continues to have participation by the children and other young relatives of living and deceased members, and their enthusiasm not only sustains the old veterans, but also gives them a fresh new audience for all those war stories. Richard Smith, son of Capt. Larry Smith, has offered to host the 2003 Reunion in San Antonio, Texas, with projected dates of April 9-12. The tentative agenda is fantastic, so mark your calendars now. Yee-e-e-ha!

John Benbow FishonJMB@aol.com

78th FS Reunion 2002 at Las Vegas, NV

On Sept 19-22 2002, the 78th Fighter Squadron held their bi-annual reunion at the New Frontier Hotel in Las Vegas Nevada. Thursday afternoon several of the members enjoyed a show on the Strip and bright and early Friday morning we all loaded on buses for a ride to Nellis Air Force Base “Fighter Town USA” for a POW ceremony and a tour of the “Thunderbirds” facility and then topped it off with lunch. Friday afternoon was free time and personally my son and I got better acquainted with the “Strip”. I would say that it is something everyone needs to see at least once. For myself it was a bit to commercialized and over hyped and since I don’t gamble, drink and I am happily married... not much there for me. Saturday morning saw the association business meeting followed by a evening banquet. Approximately 40 78th veterans made it to the event and everyone had a great time.

Mark Stevens

318th Fighter Group 2002 Reunion

On June 6, June 7, June 8, 2002 in Wyomissing PA. The 318th Fighter Group Reunion was hosted by Frank “Pinky” Rodgers at the INN at Reading in Wyomissing, Pa on Thursday, June6, thru Sunday, June 9. It was a great success with 61 people (old vets, wives, children and widows of old vets,) in attendance, representing the 6th NF, 19th, 72nd, 73rd, 333rd and 531st Fighter Squadrons. Registration was in the hospitality room(well stocked) on Thursday from Noon until the host went to bed. At least 5 people arrived Wednesday and played golf at the Willow.
Hollow Golf Course. On Friday we boarded a bus at 1145 to Strasburg, Pa. for a Dutch Country Buffet at the Hershey Farms Restaurant and then on to the Sight and Sound Theater for a really great musical performance of Biblical story of Daniel, Daniel a Dream, a Den, a Deliverer. Saturday morning was open for shopping at the factory outlets about a half mile from the INN. Afternoon was spent at the Reading Airport for the annual Reenactment of WWII, with bombed out buildings, jungle outposts, people dressed in '40s styles driving vintage autos, singing '40 songs and more. Then a mad dash back to the INN to clean up for the Reunion Banquet. The food was good and plenty of it. We were entertained by a male and female barbershop quartet who included the Air Corps Song. They forgot the tune, so we helped them. The hospitality room was open every day from 0900 until 2300 for retelling(and embellishing) of all the old war stories and enjoying the company of our comrades and their families. Sunday was reserved for good-byes at breakfast and in the hospitality room. frankr13@juno.com

318th Fighter Group 2003 Reunion

The plan is under way for the 2003 Reunion of the 318th Fighter Group. It will be held at the Marriott Northwest in Atlanta, GA during Oct 16, 17, 18. Thursday will be check in and golf. The other activities are still in the planning stages. He assures me, however, that the Hospitality Room is large and will be very hospitable. All Pacific Fighter Squadrons are invited to attend. They could have mini reunions while letting the 318th do the planning. Anyone interested can contact me at Frank J. Rodgers 432 Acer Drive Blandon, PA 19510 FrankR13@juno.com

NEWS

On-Line Roster Available

If you have access to the Internet then you may have access to the 7th Roster. Here you will be able to look up old friends and make new ones. You might be amazed at how many 7th veterans live in your area. In order to access the Roster you will need a computer with access to the Web that also has Microsoft Excel installed. Then visit the web site at: http://glorene.com/aviation/7th/private/database/index.htm
You will be asked for a username and password. The username is bushmaster and the password is snakes

HELP NEEDED

History and Memories

How can you help? I need photos and recollections of your service with the 7th Aircraft photo’s are especially in demand. War time letters to home would also be beneficial. If you could send me the originals I will scan them and return them to you promptly or you can have them reproduced yourself if you feel more comfortable with that method.

7th Fighter Command Biography Project

The following is a project to document the experiences of the Men and Women who served or were attached to the 7th Fighter Command. The biographies resulting from these questions will be made available to 7th FC veterans and their families. In addition a copy of the biographies will be donated to the libraries at the various Aviation Museums located around the country for public access.

The following are a list of suggested questions that you might want to answer:

When and why did you first get interested in Aviation?
What prompted you to join the Army Air Corp and When and Where did you do your primary training?
What was you position in the Air Corp?
At what locations were you stationed during World War II?
What are some of your most memorable experiences in the Army Air Corp?
What would you like your family to know about your time in the service that you may not have told them.
Did you stay in the Army Air Force after the war and if so what career path did you follow?
What was your rank when you left the Air Force?

Your answers to the above questions may be either written, audio, or video recorded. Please include a current and wartime photo of yourself along with any photos and documentation that are relevant to your wartime experiences.

Please send your photos and completed biography to:
Mark Stevens
7th FC Historian
14629 SE 198th St.
Renton, WA 98058-9405
ASSOCIATION DONATIONS

Thank You to all of you who were able to donate to the association since the last Newsletter came out. To date 180 of you have donated and thanks to your generosity the Newsletter will continue to be published on a twice a year basis. As you are aware there are no required dues in the association and all activities and in particular this newsletter are dependent on your generous donations. For those of you that have not gotten your donations in, it’s never to late. Once again, if you have enjoyed this newsletter and would like to see more like this, we need your help. We now have enough funds to publish this newsletter, plus possibly two more. Once again, It is understood that many of you are on fixed incomes, but If you are able to help, a suggested donation of $10.00 or more would be appreciated. Please send any donations to: Jim Van Nada, 4095 Berrywood Drive, Eugene, OR 97404-4061 Make all checks payable to the 7th Fighter Command Association. All donations are tax deductible.

NAME THAT PILOT

Do you know the names of the following pilot?

COMMUNICATION

Be sure to provide us with an e-mail if you have one. This could be your own e-mail or one of your families who could then pass on information to you. Please e-mail the editor at mail@glorene.com with your e-mail.

Also, be sure to let us know if you move. We get way to many newsletters returned due to bad addresses.

TAPS

The following list indicates those comrades who we have gotten notification of passing on since the last issue of Sunsetter.

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<th>Unit</th>
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<td>Wilson, Raymond F.</td>
<td>73rd</td>
<td>11/29/2001</td>
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Vice President: Robert L. Krueger (386th)
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Treasurer: Jim Van Nada (72nd)
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